

Morris found a close relationship between the degree of cohesion in the family and the level of adjustment when the husband goes to prison, though she brings evidence to show that repeated prison sentences will tend to erode even a healthy family structure. Family management will depend mainly on the personality of the wife. The work on civil prisoners is particularly valuable because so little is known about this group. Civil debtors present a sad picture of totally inadequate, unintelligent and confused men, who rarely know what is going on, or what is the nature of their social responsibilities whilst the maintenance defaulters prefer an annual spell in prison rather than to fulfil their obligations.

The "Welfare State" notwithstanding, our social services do not come out too well in this survey. The lack of standardized procedure in the National Assistance Board, who are the main source of support for most prisoners' families (has that ever been included in the "cost of crime"?) and their ambivalent function, acting in the interest of a client, whilst, at the same time protecting the state from abuse, leads to much unnecessary hardship and misery. The lack of co-ordination between various social agencies, the dichotomy of social work inside and outside the prison and many other weaknesses are glaringly illustrated. Mrs. Morris makes it clear that the spread of professional social work has failed to provide the only thing that would justify such an extension, namely, more intensive and better co-ordinated family care.

Three criticisms should be made: 1, The question of a control group was dismissed too easily. This is a pity because it has led to a somewhat confused discussion of the relative importance of the "separation from the husband"- "criminality of the husband" variables; 2, There is no reference at all to the families of women prisoners. Here the husbands' attempts at adjustment could have made a useful comparison; 3, The effect on children of the father being absent and in prison and disturbances of behaviour resulting from this, are recorded and evaluated at a somewhat superficial level compared with the meticulous care with which other factors were investigated.

Such criticisms do not however detract from

the intrinsic value of this survey. The careful methodology, theoretical frame of reference and practical recommendations of the book make it an immediately relevant undertaking, not only for the academic criminologist but also for the penal administrator and social worker. For all its scientific approach, there is no attempt here to hide a real sympathy with real human beings of whom it might well be said that "they also serve who only sit and wait".

JULIUS CARLEBACH

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. *The Position of Women in Primitive Societies and Other Essays in Social Anthropology*. London, 1965. Faber. Pp. 260. Price 35s.

THIS WORK CONSISTS of fourteen essays covering a wide range of anthropological studies, mainly drawn from Africa, where the author has done much field work. The more interesting two first essays concern the general standing of anthropological science to-day and the intriguing subject indicated in the title of the book. It is shown how all attempts at arriving at unifying theories and comprehensive concepts have so far failed and that the proper study of mankind is now driven back to the need to collect and collate more facts and to prosecute with greater objectivity the kind of field studies for which Professor Evans-Pritchard himself has set so good an example. His discussion of the generalizations which have been propounded during the last century evoke a salutary scepticism; it is clear that people ostensibly in search of the facts are very prone to see the facts which their preconceived theories predispose them to see. A notable example is the entirely contradictory accounts of the Seri Indians which McGee and Kroeber gave, although their observations were only separated by a few decades. In general use, wont and tradition are exceedingly tenacious among primitives. Unless therefore, this was a marked exception to the general rule we are obliged to conclude that one or other greatly erred in reading theory into fact. In anthropology, more than elsewhere, it seems true that you cannot believe your eyes when your imagination is out of focus.

The position of women in primitive societies is a question of absorbing interest, not only for the professional anthropologist, but also for the intelligent man—man as Mr. Churchill slyly reminded the House of Commons, always being understood as embracing women. Another anthropologist, who combines the erudition of the scholar with the intuitive insights of the poet, Robert Graves, has enunciated the challenging thesis that the whole outline of human history concerns the struggle for supremacy between the patriarchal and the matriarchal principle (cf. *Mammon and the Black Goddess*, 1965). Following Robert Briffault Robert Graves maintains that it was female influence that was primarily responsible for the birth of culture and started the initial steps towards civilization; and that the evils of war and slavery which were man's work, were the sources of the supersession of female power, which was essentially pacific progressive and creative. The same point of view pervades the ideas of Elisabeth Mann Borghese, whose *Ascent of Woman* appeared in 1963. No doubt many of those who are attracted towards this point of view, and women especially will be disposed to turn to works of anthropology such as this, in search of confirmation, for what may be termed, the newer feminism.

But Professor Evans-Pritchard's study, while it contains a wealth of fascinating observations about women in primitive societies in recent times, casts no decisive light on the great controversy concerning patriarchal and matriarchal influences in human history and pre-history. It does a great deal, however, to dispel many illusions and to convey a balanced and objective picture of how women work and live in societies relatively remote from what we too readily assume are the benefits of civilization. The author's discriminating interpretations are much more favourable to primitive women under a patriarchal order than has often been suggested. Thus the status of the aboriginal Australian woman has been generally regarded as low, but it is here shown that these women take an interest in all social activities and often actively participate in them. There are no unmarried adult women in primitive societies and frustration from inability to find a mate is no problem

among them as it is with us. Romantic love, as we know it, hardly indeed exists and one may smile to be reminded that some South African native complained before a government commission that love, introduced by Europeans, was spoiling their culture. For it is wrong to assume that absence of love (in the romantic sense) is all dead loss. In the absence of "the myth of woman", spouses enter into marriage in a more realistic and sensible way and commonly succeed in making it a success precisely because their expectations were not pitched too high. By reason of the pattern of parental care among the primitives, the over-possessive mother and the daughter too emotionally tied to the father, rarely present problems. Again, the kinship systems of primitive folk help to attenuate the factors which in our society produce the family problems which are enlisting the attentions of an ever increasing army of psychiatrists and welfare workers. In the primitive society a child regards, not two but many people as standing in the relation of "father" and "mother" while the equivalents of sisters and brothers are spread over a large circle of kinsfolk. Because family emotions are not concentrated on a tiny circle of persons as in our society, the primitive does not suffer so much from the death or absence of its actual genitors. In primitive societies there is less conflict between the sexes because their spheres of activities are more clearly demarcated and if this demarcation is for primitive woman a restriction, it is also a protection. Primitive women do not see themselves as an underprivileged class as against a class of men with whom they seek to gain social equality. They have never heard of social equality and they do not want to be like men.

At a time when the relations of men and women in civilized societies are in process of so great and rapid changes, it is salutary to reflect upon the picture here presented of how the sexes have reached a *modus vivendi* in more stable and simpler cultures. This is a work which will interest the intelligent lay person, man or woman, as well as those engaged in the professional study of anthropology.

HERBERT BREWER